

UNITED STATES SENATOR • IOWA

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Grassley Learns Anthrax Clean-up Tops \$23 Million So Far:
EPA Says Final Cost Unknown

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, has learned the cost of cleaning the anthrax from the Hart Senate Office Building and other Capitol Hill buildings is already at more than \$23 million, and the tab is still running, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"That's a lot of money," Grassley said. "Unfortunately, the EPA's response is so lacking in context and answers to all my questions that it's difficult for the taxpayers to judge whether their money was used properly. The EPA's work to make the Hart building safe is important, but so is a full accounting of how the agency handled the cost. I plan to learn more about the details of this project."

Grassley just received an accounting of the clean-up costs from the EPA in response to his Jan. 18, 2002, request. The EPA said the Hart building is part of the "Capitol Hill Anthrax Site, which encompasses over thirty buildings." The agency said clean-up work continues at other buildings, and it has "obligated over \$23 million for this effort against an approved ceiling of \$25 million." The agency said it will not know the final clean-up cost until all of the work is completed, and it receives the contractors' bills. EPA did not provide information about the cost of cleaning up only the Hart building, as requested.

Grassley said several other questions remain about the EPA's use of contractors in the clean-up project. The EPA did not answer whether contractors had to meet any performance measures -- if there were any -- or perform specific tasks to be paid. Also missing in the EPA's response were details about how each contractor was paid, whether by the hour, per task, or per contract; and details about food, housing and transportation costs.

The EPA's response excluded "specific details on the type of service each contractor is providing for the remediation," as Grassley asked. Instead, the EPA provided general phrases such as "clean-up contract," "technical support contract," and "supplies." "Supplies could mean anything from sponges to wash the walls or brooms to sweep the halls, to protective suits for workers or the chlorine dioxide gas to kill anthrax spores," Grassley said.

Grassley said the further details he plans to seek about the clean-up include what proportion of the clean-up budget went to the Hart building versus other buildings in the Capitol Hill complex, and what other anthrax clean-up projects are ongoing. "The anthrax clean-up was a huge undertaking," Grassley said. "I hope the EPA exercised as much fiscal restraint as it could in getting the clean-up done."

Attachment: the EPA's response to Grassley's inquiry

